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TAGS: [OPRC](#) [KMDR](#) [TU](#)
SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT
TUESDAY, AUGUST 19, 2008

In Today's Papers

Sudanese President Al-Bashir's Istanbul Visit Draws Strong Reactions

All papers report the first Turkey-Africa Cooperation Summit began Monday in Istanbul with the participation from about 50 African countries, including Sudan's controversial President Omar Hassan al-Bashir. Prime Minister Erdogan will attend the official launch of the summit on Tuesday.

Media coverage widely criticizes Sudanese President Omar Al-Bashir's participation in this week's Turkey-Africa Summit in Istanbul. Liberal Radikal carries the headline, "The Man Who Instigated a Genocide is in Istanbul," and notes, "The (Turkish) government was seriously criticized for al-Bashir's visit to Ankara," earlier this year. NTV notes this is, "Al-Bashir's second visit to Turkey in the last eight months." Mainstream Vatan carries the headline, "Al-Bashir Crisis," as, "Sudan's Al-Bashir Stuns the World by Coming to Istanbul for the Africa Summit." Erdal Safak of mainstream Sabah wrote today, "My concern is that this summit will be overshadowed in the international arena due to the participation of one guest, even though no arrest warrant has been issued for Al-Bashir and Turkey is not a signatory to the agreement which established the International Criminal Court (ICC)." Mainstream Hurriyet notes, "Al-Bashir even shocked the Western press with his participation in Istanbul's Africa Summit," as Western reports of the summit "are not about the summit, but about Al-Bashir." Leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet criticized the government for receiving Al-Bashir as, "The red carpet was rolled out to welcome a man accused by the ICC of genocide," and, "though he is held responsible for the deaths of hundreds of thousands of people, he is able to come and go comfortably to and from Turkey." Leftist Taraf carries the front-page banner headline, "A Genocide Suspect is a Guest of the State," and inside the headline reads, "The Butcher of Darfur in Istanbul." Taraf says "Bashir should be arrested if the ICC issues an arrest warrant for the Sudanese president while he is in Turkey, citing the 1998 arrest of Chile's Former President Pinochet in Britain upon an arrest decision by a Spanish court. Taraf quotes the Ankara-based International Criminal Court Coalition as "slamming Turkey for violating international law by inviting and hosting a

leader who has committed genocide." Papers recall that in January, Turkey had come under fire when President Gul hosted Bashir in Ankara.

Editorial Commentary on Bashir at Turkey-Africa Cooperation Summit

Erdal Safak wrote in mainstream Sabah (8/19): "The Turkey-Africa Cooperation Summit is a very good example of the importance the AKP government gives to Turkish foreign policy. Turkey was declared a "strategic partner" by the African Union. Because Turkey has no intentions of looting the resources of the African continent, Africa's approach towards Turkey is more sympathetic than the other strategic partners. This summit was created after long and intensive diplomatic efforts. Our one concern is that such an important summit will be overshadowed in the international arena because of one guest: Sudanese President Al-Bashir. Even though the International Criminal Court charged him with perpetrating genocide, this court case has not yet been finalized. Moreover, Turkey is not a signatory to the agreement establishing the International Criminal Court. Of course, nothing will happen to Al-Bashir in Istanbul but it will be real shame if such an important summit is overshadowed by Al-Bashir in the international media.

Musharraf Resigns

Media outlets have little sympathy for Pakistani President Musharraf as he is seen as coming to power under a military coup and leaving office before impeachment proceedings by a civil parliament had nearly commenced. Mainstream Sabah notes, "He forced his way into office, and he was forced out." Liberal Radikal carries the headline, "Pakistan Settles Its Accounts with Musharraf."

ANKARA 00001498 002 OF 003

Islamist-oriented Yeni Safak notes, "He came to office via a coup and he was forced out," as "the public took to the streets to celebrate Musharraf's resignation." Leftist Taraf headlines with Government Spokesman Cemil Cicek's words, "Musharraf Has Not Applied to Live in Turkey," despite the Pakistani leader's strong ties to Turkey. Islamist-oriented Zaman reports, "There is uncertainty about where Musharraf will flee," as, "PM Erdogan told Pakistani Awaz Newspaper that Musharraf would be welcome in Turkey for a short time," but not as a permanent resident "because that could create new tensions between Turkey and Pakistan."

Editorial Commentary on Musharraf's Resignation

Rusen Cakir wrote in Vatan: Musarraaf could choose not to resign but under these conditions it wouldn't be possible for him to rule for any longer. If he is sent to exile, Western countries will not be too willing to accept him. Between Saudi Arabia and Turkey, I am sure Musharraf will choose to settle in Turkey. But there are many serious problems in Pakistan which will not be resolved immediately after Musharraf leaves the country.

U.S. and Turkish Officials Negotiate Delivery of Aid to Georgia
Sabah and Cumhuriyet: Papers note Pentagon Spokesman Bryan Whitman told reporters yesterday, "The State Department is looking at other options for sustaining the humanitarian relief operations and is looking at some naval vessels." In addition, Whitman noted, "The State Department is working at the necessary agreements to achieve some passage in the straits of Turkey and things like that."

Editorial Commentary on Georgian President Saakashvili

Husnu Mahalli writes in tabloid Aksam: "The U.S., NATO, and Israel sell Georgia USD 200 million of weapons every year. Saakashvili was used by the U.S., NATO, Israel, and George Soros."

Turkish Energy, Foreign Ministers to Tehran for Natural Gas Deal
Hurriyet, Milliyet, Sabah, Radikal, Cumhuriyet, Zaman and others report Energy Minister Hilmi Guler said Monday that Turkey and Iran were working on technical details to finalize an energy deal between the two countries within a month. "I will probably go to Iran in 15 days together with Foreign Minister Ali Babacan. We want to finalize the deal within a month," Hilmi Guler told reporters. On whether the deal was cancelled due to U.S. pressure on Turkey, Guler

said, "Turkey is an independent country, and Turkey's interests are in question here. When making investments, we must consider Turkey's energy security," he said.

Editorial Commentary on Iran, Ahmadinejad's Turkey Visit

Fikret Bila commented in mainstream Milliyet (8/19): "Everyone is aware that Iran is a U.S. target because of its nuclear program. Washington should really calculate the possible results of such an attack very carefully. Because of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the Middle East is already on fire. The U.S. should not open a third front in the Middle East by attacking Iran. Naturally, Turkey is not very warm towards the idea of a nuclear-armed Iran. Such a development will have negative impact on Turkey as well. Ankara will not object Iran's nuclear technology for peaceful means but Ankara should warn the U.S. that it will not contribute in an offensive against Iran."

Mustafa Balbay in Cumhuriyet: "Ahmadinejad made it clear his most important 'political message' was delivered by attending Friday prayers in a Sunni mosque in Istanbul. During Ahmadinejad's visit to Turkey, no energy deal was signed. What was the aim of this visit? What of Turkey's interests were met by the visit? It seems that Turkey's traditional foreign policy and the AKP's foreign policy are moving along separate paths again."

ANKARA 00001498 003 OF 003

Turkey's Draft National Program for EU Ready

All papers report Government Spokesman Cemil Cicek told the press on Monday a draft for Turkey's third national program regarding European Union (EU) reforms is complete.

Cicek said the national program will be finalized after the Foreign Minister and chief EU negotiator Ali Babacan explains it to the representatives of political parties and NGOs. "Turkey continues working on the 400-page national document that will be submitted to the EU. The program consists of four parts over the next four years. The program requires 131 law changes for EU harmonization," Cicek said.

TV News:
CNN Turk

Domestic News

- Opposition CHP leader Deniz Baykal said AKP vice-chairman Saban Disli's parliamentary immunity should be removed so he can be tried in connection with the corruption charges against him.

- On Monday, the residents of the Black Sea town of Rize staged protests against government plans to build 62 hydroelectric power plants in the region.

- A draft bill approved by the parliament's planning committee replaces three separate state institutions for natural disasters by a single agency named the Department for Natural Disasters and Emergencies.

International News

- A U.S. defense official said Russia has deployed several tactical missile launchers to South Ossetia, putting the Georgian capital, Tbilisi, within their striking range.

- NATO foreign ministers are to meet on Tuesday to discuss the Georgian crisis.

- In order to enable Georgians to leave the country via air and facilitate humanitarian aid, Turkey relaxed its flight quotas over its air space to and from Yerevan.

- Turkish trucks carrying goods for Georgia and Azerbaijan have to use mountain roads as Russian troops block the road from Gori to Tbilisi.

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